

ISRAEL AND THE ATOMIC BOMB

By TERESSA DALTON HENDRY

A RIPPLE OF CONSTERNATION was reflected over the air waves and in the news media in late October, 1977, when an article in *Rolling Stone* was being widely reviewed. Via a New York UPI dispatch we were informed that "Israel put together a secret nuclear arsenal a decade ago by raiding uranium from Europe and the United States." Reportedly, the CIA had informed President Johnson that several hundred pounds of bomb-grade uranium had been smuggled from a nuclear processing facility in Apollo, Pennsylvania, with French and West German governments being credited with aiding and abetting the Israelis in the venture.

This front-page 1977 coverage may alert more effectively than have earlier accounts. A *Daily Telegraph* London UPI dispatch of June 18, 1974, asserted that Israel "has built up an arsenal of atomic bombs . . . the one certainty of the Middle East is that she (Israel) has stockpiled atomic bombs . . . Israel first set off on the nuclear road

with a secret deal with France in 1956, then 'embarked on a crash program' to produce nuclear weapon fuel at Dimona, a nuclear research center in the Negev Desert."

At the time General Brown made his outburst against "Jewish influence in American politics" Evans and Novak, November 21, 1974, headlined an article "Pentagon Worries Over Israeli Arms Drain," at the expense of our Army and Air Force.

Shortly thereafter, Dec. 13, 1974, the *Christian Science Monitor*, in a Tel Aviv, Israel dispatch, wrote: "Construction of Israel's first nuclear power station will begin in two years and take about six years to finish, project director Moshe Katz said. Mr. Katz told a convention of the nuclear scientists union at Ben Gurion University in Beersheba that the \$490 million plant near the port of Ashdod will produce 600 megawatts of electricity for the Israel Electricity Corporation. American scientists will participate in the project."

On August 1, 1975, a Washington (UPI) dispatch quoted Dale R. Tahinen, a former Defense Intelligence Agency official: "Israel may have 10 weapons, each with a force comparable to the atom bombs used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Dana Adams Schmidt, in the *Christian Science Monitor*, August 1, 1975, maintained that "The Egyptians in particular and the Arabs generally will be under more pressure internally to turn to the Soviet Union for protection" due to the fact that the "Israelis not only have the materials to put together atomic bombs within weeks, days or even hours, but that they have actually established an arsenal of at least 10 nuclear bombs of Hiroshima-Nagasaki strength ... the French-built Dimona reactor in Israel has produced enough plutonium to make about one Hiroshima-sized bomb a year since about 1964 ... the Israelis are now reported in public to have actually completed such weapons ... While State and Defense Department officials decline comment, such a private expert as Robert J. Pranger, of the American Enterprise Institute, says he thinks the report is probably true."

Editorially on August 1, 1975, the CSM supported the Schmidt article stating, "If Israel emerged as a nuclear power, it is hard to imagine Egypt refraining from following suit. Some people despair that any international measures can long curb nationalistic impulses to erase the disadvantages of not having the bomb." Similarly, the same day, the CSM reported that "Senator Stuart Symington says the international safeguards against the spread of nuclear weapons are ineffective and commercial interests are prevailing over weapons-control considerations ... the International Atomic Energy Agency furnishes no safeguards against the spread of nuclear weapons and 'has no power of either prevention or enforcement.'"

More than a year later, Oct. 28, 1976, the CSM headlined an article by Schmidt stating: "The fuel-air explosive bomb sprays an area 50 feet in diameter with a

kerosene-like substance and then ignites ... with this weapon the Israelis might be able, in a fifth Arab-Israeli war, to knock out Egyptian and Syrian Air Forces as they did in 1967 and were unable to do in 1973 ... decision to sell the Israelis the fuel-air explosive bomb was part of a new agreement that also would provide them with a hitherto secret heat-seeking device, the ALIR, that identifies objects in the dark—and 120 new M-60 tanks."

The *Kansas City Star* of Feb. 25, 1977, in an AP Tel Aviv dispatch reported that "Israel built a nuclear reactor in 1961 capable of producing raw materials for nuclear bombs over stiff American and French opposition, according to a new biography of David Ben-Gurion, former prime minister ... an Israeli newspaper reported today that the Jewish terrorist 'Stern' gang was the killer of Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden, the UN Middle East mediator assassinated near Jerusalem in 1948. The paper quoted a former Stern Commander." Reference is made to President Eisenhower's Jan. 3, 1961 ultimatum to Ben-Gurion. His insistence that American experts be permitted to inspect the top-secret research reactor near Dimona in the Negev Desert, was at first ignored by Ben-Gurion, who later relented. Though Israel had purchased the reactor from France, in 1960, France tried to prevent completion of the construction. Later France "agreed not to obstruct the project, but withdrew their financing. It was completed by private donations, the biographer says."

On May 6, 1977, a Brussels AP appeared in the *Kansas City Star*: "A European Common Market official shed a little more light yesterday on the mysterious mid-sea disappearance of 200 tons of uranium in 1968, saying the firm that was to have received the shipment took several months to report it missing ... that the uranium had vanished from an ocean freighter bound from Antwerp, Belgium to Genoa, Italy. *The Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times* and former U.S. Senate aide Paul L. Leventhal, all citing unnamed authoritative sources, had made the earlier

reports and suggested the uranium might have been diverted to Israel for use in a nuclear reactor that produces enough plutonium each year to build a nuclear bomb. Israel has denied any involvement in the incident."

The following day, May 7, 1977, the *Kansas City Times* Rome (AP) headlined an article "Uranium Linked to Morocco," reporting that one Enrico Jacchia "cast another veil over the mysterious shipment" which "could be processed to make the equivalent of 60 atomic bombs of the size of the one that devastated Hiroshima." Reportedly, "the uranium had been dispatched to the small company, SAICA, in Milan, Italy. But the markings on the 560 drums said they contained plumbate, a salt formed from lead dioxide acid that requires special handling." Jacchia commented as to the ineffective investigative powers of the Common Market, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and the CIA, tracing the 200 tons of uranium, mined in Zaire, from its loading in Antwerp, Belgium on Nov. 16, 1968, through landings at North Sea, Atlantic, Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, until six months later when "we accepted that there had been a diversion."

Heads of government of the nine common market countries, as well as Gen. Delmar Crowson of the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, were advised of the situation in a top secret memo, but "in the following years 'there was a spreading cover-up' that continued until last week ..."

On June 26, 1977, a *Washington Star* article, "Bomb Grade N-Fuel Missing," reported that "The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) is preparing to make the momentous announcement that over the years the government has been unable to account for several tons of bomb-grade materials used in various nuclear fuel programs." Reportedly, at Apollo, Pa., millions of dollars worth of bomb-grade metal has disappeared, where "government regulations have produced little more than an occasional slap on the wrist for the plant's operators."

The role of Zalman M. Shapiro, as head of a company called NMEC, formed in 1956 by three former AEC scientists, is explored—"Zalman M. Shapiro, then NMEC's president, was described by one source as a man who 'operated on the come,' taking material from one batch and using it to account for losses in a prior batch until the losses became too big to cover up any more." Reportedly, Shapiro now works for Westinghouse, having sold the Apollo plant in 1967. But irregularities continue at the Apollo plant. "Despite the fact that the NRC investigations had the proper security clearances, they were 'given the royal runaround' according to one source. There were secrets so secret that even the compilers of secrets were forbidden them."

And so it goes! But it is interesting to back-date to 1967 when news headlines announced the death of Dr. J. Robert Oppenheimer, the "atomic bomb father." An AP dispatch, Princeton, Feb. 20, 1967, asserts that "Oppenheimer pioneered in the development of the first American atomic bomb. In 1954 he was denied access to secret documents by the Atomic Energy Commission because of alleged association with Communists. The same agency nine years later awarded Oppenheimer the \$50,000 Fermi award for 'his outstanding contributions to theoretical physics and his scientific and administrative leadership.'" (The tax-free award was derived from "your dough and mine," per Fulton Lewis, Jr., writing in *Human Events* April 20, 1963. Citing 10 questionable Oppenheimer affiliations, including financial contributions to the Communist Party, Lewis noted that President Johnson presented the award personally, and with great fanfare.)

Could the mid-fifties activities of Oppenheimer and associates have been forerunner to today's revelations?

A shocked U.S. citizenry would not be so shocked at last year's revelations via *Rolling Stone*, had the news media in general reported all the available information regarding the disappearance of materials necessary to the building of nuclear arsenals—in Israel or elsewhere!